

Carroll County Health Department

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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May 14, 2020

Dear Faith Community Leaders,

As we enter Phase 1 of the Maryland Strong: Roadmap to Recovery, I wanted to reach out to you to ensure that you are aware of the new guidelines for faith communities, and provide some additional recommendations to help keep your congregations safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

The Executive Order issued May 13th states that religious facilities may be open to the general public provided that the number of persons permitted at any time does not exceed 50% of maximum occupancy (related to fire code or permits). I am concerned that only following the requirements of the Executive Order is less than ideal to protect your congregants. I urge you to implement the recommendations issued by the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives that a workgroup of faith leaders across Maryland suggest limiting attendance to the number of people who can fit into your worship space while maintaining a distance of 7 feet between individuals or family groups. Other recommended public health measures include:

<https://goci.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/05/Faith-Based-Recommendations.pdf>

- Wearing face coverings
- Taking non-contact temperature at the door (preferred) or at home
- Refraining from congregational singing
- Sanitizing contact surfaces before and after worship
- Scheduling multiple, shorter services
- Continuing faith-based ministerial visits following public health guidelines
- Ensuring that ill congregants, or those exposed to someone who is ill, do not attend services

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Faith Community Leaders

Faith leaders may choose to implement stricter rules, and as the Health Officer for Carroll County, I would recommend the following rules to protect your congregants:

- Live streaming of services
- Encouraging vulnerable members of your congregation to continue to participate virtually
- Holding religious services outside if at all possible
- Considering delaying opening until we are in Phase 2, or at least until you are prepared to provide additional measures for safety, including:
 - planned traffic patterns
 - adequate amounts of disinfectant
 - disposable masks for those who forget them
 - sanitizer
 - alternative music plans (congregational singing may increase viral spread)
 - signage to facilitate appropriate social distancing measures
 - safe processes for offerings, Communion, and other actions that involve multiple people touching the same objects
 - plans for congregants who become ill while at a service

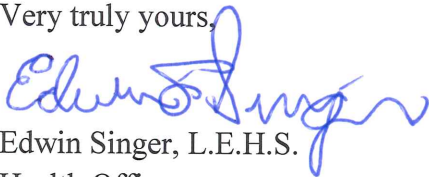
Your denomination may have additional guidance for your congregation.

If you have questions or concerns regarding these recommendations, or would like assistance in determining how to hold religious services safely, please contact our Environmental Health Bureau at (410) 876-1884. We would be happy to assist you.

For additional information on COVID-19, please refer to and share the Carroll County Health Department's website at cchd.maryland.gov/covid-19/ or call our call center at 410-876-4848, open daily from 8 am – 5 pm.

Thank you for your time and attention. With your cooperation, we can better protect your congregations and our entire community, and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Very truly yours,



Edwin Singer, L.E.H.S.
Health Officer

C: Carroll County Commissioners